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### A TEN-PLATE STOVE

In the Museum's collection of early American iron work is an interesting ten-plate stove, in fine condition, bearing the name of the District Furnace, which was erected on Pine Creek, in District Township, Berks County, Pa., previous to 1784, at which time it was owned by John Leshner. The sides of the stove are embellished with the Arms of Pennsylvania in relief. On the front plate is a rendering of the American eagle with shield, while the back plate is decorated with the design of a graceful urn.

The age of the stove is somewhat uncertain, but it is probable that this type is of a late period, about the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the attitude of the reclining horses in the State Arms would indicate the date of 1823, as that of manufacture. While the advent of ten-plate stoves in the latter half of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of the decadence of stove making in Pennsylvania, the one here shown is perhaps one of the handsomest of its kind that has yet turned up. It is an excellent example of American iron work of nearly a century ago.



TEN-PLATE STOVE  
Early Nineteenth Century



### COLLECTION OF CHESSMEN

The best authorities agree that chess was invented about 600 A. D. in India. The Hindoos taught the game to the Persians, but the Arabs who captured Persia were the real lovers of the game and in their Asiatic and European invasions they taught the game to the civilized world.

The Koran prohibited the followers of the faith from representing animals, birds or man in decorations, carvings or manuscripts, so that they substituted in place of the ancient chess figures pieces carved in cylinder form. The group here shown belongs to an old India ivory set used by the followers of

Mohammed and was sent from Bengal by Prince Singha, a native chess player of that country.

The shape of the chessmen as introduced into Europe by the Arabs did not long remain popular; in each locality we soon find the shape of the figures



OLD IVORY CHESSMEN  
India

changed to conform with taste, traditions and religions of the country into which the game had been introduced. The Christian Church also objected to chessmen used in non-Christian countries. In Florence, as early as 1061, a bishop was reprimanded for playing chess in public:

"Was it right, I say, and consistent with thy duty, to sport away thy evenings amidst the vanity of chess, and to defile the hand which offers up the body of the Lord, the tongue that mediates between God and man, with the pollution of a sacrilegious game?"

We find, therefore, that the forms of the pieces were soon made to conform with European and Christian ideas.



SPANISH CHESS KING  
Fourteenth Century  
Charles V. of Germany, 1550

In the Eastern game there was no queen, a counsellor or general, called the Pherz, stood next to the king, but the veneration of the times towards the Holy Virgin naturally led to the introduction of a queen. We also find a bishop in full dress, and in Iceland a bishop's mitre carved from walrus tusk is introduced into the game; Biblical figures, such as the "Adoration of the Magi," the "Baptism of Christ," and "Adam and Eve in the Garden," are carved upon the pieces.

Many of the European museums have in their collections from one to a

dozen old ivory chessmen, some carved as early as the ninth century. The directors of some of these museums have had casts of these chess figures made and colored to resemble as nearly as possible the old pieces that are made from stag horn, stone, ivory or walrus tusk.

In the collection to which this refers will be found nearly fifty reproductions of medieval chess figures from the museums in Munich, Paris, Berlin, Florence, Nuremberg and London. The most interesting original figure in



REPRODUCTIONS OF EARLY CHESSMEN

1. Ivory Queen, Twelfth Century, found in Salerno, Italy
2. Ivory King, Twelfth Century, in National Museum, Florence
3. Ivory King, Henry I., Twelfth Century

the collection is a carving of Charles V., Emperor of Germany, seated upon a lion; this dates back to 1550.

Of the entire sets that composed of thirty-two German china figures is most interesting. Each piece is different; the sixteen pieces are all mounted, while the sixteen pawns are foot soldiers in the costume of about 1550. Another German set of about 1800 is made of gun metal, the black king representing Gustavus Adolphus, and the silver leader Ferdinand II. Emperor of Austria.

The three carved ivory sets are beautiful examples of Chinese workmanship. The finest and largest set mounted on carved balls, the property of Mr. John Culin, is especially worthy of careful inspection.

The chess books range in date from 1525, Rome, down to the first book of the kind printed in America, Philadelphia, 1802, reproduced from medieval chess manuscripts, the oldest, Arabic 1140.

To Philadelphians an old woodcut of Kempelen's chess automaton should be of special interest. This mechanical chess-player, invented in Vienna in 1769, was exhibited throughout Europe; before it has stood and played

Frederick the Great, Dr. Benjamin Franklin and the Emperor Napoleon. The Kempelen automaton was brought to America in 1826, making its home in Philadelphia, and was exhibited on Sixth street near Walnut. This historic automaton was consumed by fire on July 5, 1854, when the Chinese Museum and the Philadelphia National Theatre at Ninth and Chestnut streets were burned in the great fire of that year.

J. F. M., JR.



### OLD SILVER

Mr. C. Hartman Kuhn has deposited on loan in the Museum a collection of twenty-three examples of silver, the work of English and American silver-smiths of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The oldest of the English pieces is a thirteen-inch paten with engraved arms in the centre, made



EARLY AMERICAN SILVER

by John Martin Stocker and Edw. Peacock, which bears the date letter for 1705. A companion piece, ten inches in diameter, was produced in 1727 in London by Thomas Mason. A tankard tray with armorial bearings is stamped with the mark of Robert Abercromby and the date 1740, while a pair of decanter coasters was made by Robert Hennell in 1785. Among the English pieces of the nineteenth century are a large cake basket by Robert Garrard (1810), and a knife, fork and spoon, of elaborate workmanship, belonging to the early Victorian period.